

ALCOHOLISM
ITS CAUSE AND CURE
From the Viewpoint of
Science of Mind

Foreword

This discussion of alcoholism has been written especially for those whose addiction is a definite escape mechanism. While this category of addiction is in the majority, of course, it is also recognized that there are many other reasons for alcoholism.

Those who have been healed of alcoholism should be directed into some creative activity which gives them self-expression, the results of which compensate them for the apparent gratification they received through their addiction. It is generally accepted that some form of useful service to humanity, perhaps helping other sufferers, is one of the best possible ways of seeking permanent happiness.

—E. H.

By and large, alcoholic addiction is the result of a wrong adjustment to life. It is the result of an emotional unbalance, following one's inability squarely to meet the situations and conditions that arise in personal experience. This inability to meet situations is, of course, largely unconscious; that is, it is subjective, hidden, and therefore unknown to the conscious faculties.

When this maladjustment to life reaches a point where one becomes a habitual drinker, it is evident that in an unconscious manner he or she is seeking self-destruction! This attempt to avoid the realities of everyday contact with life has reached a point where delusion alone can compensate the imagination for whatever one desires to become or to attain. Unconsciously, alcoholics

seek oblivion through self-destruction. Of course, the mental process whereby they arrive at this conclusion is mostly subjective.

We are all familiar with people who, at a critical point in their careers, get drunk: the ones who throw their finest opportunities to the wind and seek oblivion through the loss of consciousness. At the moment that faith is needed, fear dominates. The desire to lose themselves, even to destroy themselves, becomes stronger than the assurance that they can meet and handle any situation that arises.

This does not mean, however, that everyone who drinks is seeking self-destruction. We are talking about that class of drinkers who become submerged in the habit, and unfortunately all too many drinkers of hard liquor are of this type. It is for those who suffer from an irresistible desire to become submerged in the habit that this was written.

Habit not the real disease

In such cases the habit, itself, is not the real disease. It is an unconscious attempt to escape from the real disease. The disease itself is some inner emotional state, of which the clients generally are not at all aware, but from which

they unconsciously shrink. They are impelled to seek escape through the act of self-forgetting or self-destruction. If this is the case, it follows that the habit will be healed only when its cause is destroyed. In other words, it is not alcoholism, as though it were a thing in itself, that should be attacked, but the hidden cause back of the addiction that needs to be eradicated.

If the cure is to become a real and lasting healing, it will be accomplished only by first uprooting those hidden and subjective causes which lie back of the actual disease, the elimination of unconscious frustrations, whether they occurred in early youth or in later life, for addiction is an unconscious attempt either to express what is felt but not consciously known—to escape from some subjective restriction—or else, by self-destruction, to reach an imaginary oblivion.

This requires mental surgery, an expression which a few years ago might have caused amusement but which today is quite familiar among psychologists as well as among mental and spiritual practitioners. Indeed, mental surgery is a reality in many cases, and the things that may be operated upon mentally with hope of success outnumber those that may be operated upon physically with the same expectation.

The alcoholic is not necessarily a mental, spiritual, or moral weakling. Indeed, many of the best minds have experienced the flight into delusion, an unconscious attempt to escape from the real disease, which is hidden.

Of course, there are other causes for certain forms of alcoholism: the often-indulged-in habit of the "pick-me-up," the bracer after a hard day's work; the social habit of the too occasional cocktail; the environment of childhood; the tendency to form habits that others have, for fear of being thought odd or different. Unfortunately, there are those who think that to be a good drinker of hard liquor is to be manly and virile. Nothing can be farther removed from the truth. Often virility lies in abstinence rather than in indulgence.

It is because the reasons for drinking may be legion that the analyst finds such difficulty in uncovering them; perhaps a frustration in childhood, perhaps a faulty environment, possibly the result of a social habit, neglect and loneliness in childhood; a too indulgent father or mother, a desire to still remain at the mother's breast or under the father's guidance—a not-grownup attitude—but in most cases of overindulgence, some subtle inferiority complex is indicated.

Such flights into the unconscious generally are

attempts to turn back the stream of life action into channels where there is no longer any self-discipline or self-restraint—such a lack of self-confidence that they feel they must have release from the real issues and problems of living. Thus we see that the cause of most alcoholism is the seed of desire planted in the garden of emotional unfulfillment. This produces a maladjustment to life and living. It follows, then, that to remove this inner conflict is also to remove its objective effect. And what is this but a healing of thought?

Uncovering the cause

In the science of psychology this is accomplished by bringing the compulsion to the surface to be self-seen and thereby dissipated. This is the mental surgery of psychology; the analysis of the soul, taking apart and again reassembling the psyche. The afflicted persons have lost conscious command of themselves. Their mental faculties have weakened. Their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual faculties are no longer in proper balance. They are unstable and can no longer meet the everyday issues of life. They seek flight into a world of fantasy and delusion, and in extreme cases, it is believed by some that alcoholics seek complete self-destruction. At any rate,

they seek to avoid what they no longer feel competent to meet.

In turning from reality, the sufferers seek the unreality of illusion. They temporarily feel themselves supreme, the master of their destiny through fantasy rather than accomplishment. They are "make-believe" people, overgrown children impersonating their desires through a make-believe world of delusion. In trying to express themselves, they are never themselves!

The form any individual habit takes is naturally conditioned by the temperament of the one seeking self-expression. There is really no single type of drinker. The cause of overindulgence depends largely on the conditions surrounding the one who is afflicted with the habit, and as we are all individuals, so the cause must be handled in such a manner as to meet the individual need. This problem is always individual, as are all other problems.

But there is a general theory underlying all such causes, and this theory (now accepted by most psychologists and mental practitioners) is that behind any habit where the one afflicted seeks escape from reality—that is, from normal contact with everyday life and its problems—there is a lack of true self-confidence, a dearth of self-realization, a lack of poise and balance.

This is shown by the fact that in nearly all such cases the clients are penitent, remorseful, discouraged, unhappy, nervous, and irritable. They dodge responsibility and are filled with self-condemnation. They feel they are "no good," not at all worthwhile; they are desperate and as soon as possible must seek flight again into their dream world—into their world of illusion where they reign supreme in their own imagination. They are now king, creator, conqueror, masters of their own destiny. They feel confident, happy, and temporarily self-sufficient. But alas, they are too soon deprived of their fleeting dream; the vision vanishes and the hard facts of reality again confront them with the life they must live.

After each flight into illusion, they are less able to cope with the world of reality. More and more frequently they seek the dream world, and finally they will do anything in their power to accomplish their purpose, which is to escape into the wilderness of self-deception.

And what of the cure, for cure there must be to every human ill?

The clients must be given back to themselves, and there are two ways or methods through which this giving-back process may be accomplished.

The analytical method

The first way we shall mention is in the field of psychology, unrelated to spiritual values but nonetheless scientific. The clients are helped to see for themselves where the real cause of their trouble lies. They must start with a real and sincere desire to be healed; they must wish to be rid of their habit.

The psychologist is going to give the clients back to themselves, and in the new life which the clients are to envision, alcohol plays no important part whatsoever. The subtle cause of the habit, which lies deep in the unconscious, is to be uncovered and self-seen. It generally is destroyed when self-seen. This calls for the most complete cooperation between client and psychologist.

The psychologists are understanding, patient, and gentle, but they remorselessly probe into the lower streams of consciousness until they discover the cause of the disease. It has been discovered that willpower plays a minor role in this performance, while imagination plays a very important one indeed. In this system and procedure, it necessarily follows that the client's entire past must be uncovered and brought to light; that is, it must be self-seen, for self-seen it is self-dissipated.

Naturally, such a process is cumbersome, long contin-

ued, and expensive. It could not be otherwise. The criticism often aimed at psychologists because of the length of time it takes to make a complete analysis and because of the expense attached to the process, is generally unjustified. It is based on an entire ignorance of the principles involved.

It is evident that if psychologists must uncover the facts of one's entire human experience, they cannot be expected to do so in a few days, weeks, or even months. And it is only fair to expect psychologists to be adequately compensated for their time and effort. If more were known about the necessarily lengthy process of this treatment, less criticism would be leveled at those who devote their time and attention to its technique.

A complete analysis has taken place only when the whole story has risen to the surface: the early frustrations, the disappointments in childhood, the shocks of life, the dreams of daytime and evening, the fantasy of nighttime and the longings of waking hours—all of these must be taken into account. The shames, disillusionments, ambitions, hopes, fears, and failures of an entire lifetime of self-experience are not quickly brought to the light of day. And the psychologist must at all times gently lead clients to do the uncovering for themselves.